

P L A N N I N G C O M M I S S I O N

ACTION MINUTES

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2001

Chair Parsons called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. at the Twin Pines Senior and Community Center.

ROLL CALL:

Present, Commissioners: Parsons, Mathewson, Wiecha, Gibson, Petersen, Feierbach

Absent, Commissioners: Torre

Present, Staff: Community Development Director Ewing (CDD), Associate Planner Ouse (AP), City Attorney Savaree (CA), Recording Secretary Flores, (RS).

AGENDA STUDY SESSION: None

AGENDA AMENDMENTS:

Item 5, Consent Calendar, removed from agenda by CDD Ewing.

Motion: By Commissioner Mathewson, seconded by Commissioner Wiecha, to move Item 6, Study Session, to follow Item 7A, Public Hearing. Motion passed.

COMMUNITY FORUM (Public Comments): None

CONSENT CALENDAR:

Minutes for November 20, 2001 Postponed.

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

Public Hearing - 700 Island Parkway: To consider a Conditional Use Permit to allow a revision to an existing sign program at Autobahn Motors. The revisions would include two new building-mounted signs facing Island Parkway and a new 20'-10" freestanding sign along the Island Parkway frontage. A Use Permit is required to revise the design standards set forth with the Planned Development District; (Appl. No. 01-0359); APN: 040-360-400; Zoned: PD 703 (Planned Development); CEQA Status: Categorically Exempt; Applicant: Steve Peterson, California Signs; Owner: Donald Lucas

The staff report was summarized by AP Ouse, recommending approval subject to conditions as included in Exhibit A.

Responding to C Petersen's concerns about the visibility of the building-mounted signs from the adjacent condominiums, AP Ouse stated that, since they are not within 300' of the project they did not receive notices in the mail, however the agenda was posted in the usual public places.

Applicant Steve Peterson confirmed that the lighting on the property is probably going to be brighter than the signs, but that the backgrounds do not illuminate, and that they are set so far back from the roadway he does not believe they will be an issue for the condominiums. He asked if it would be possible for Mercedes to come back with a design for a free-standing sign that would accommodate staff's concerns. Chair Parsons asked the applicant if he took into consideration the placement of the tall sign with respect to the planned

major changes at Ralston and the Freeway. Mr. Peterson responded that he was not totally aware of the plans.

Chair Parsons opened the Public Hearing. No one came forward to speak.

MOTION: By Commissioner Wiecha, seconded by Commissioner Mathewson, to close the Public Hearing. Motion passed.

The Commissioners concurred that they were in favor of the two proposed wall-mounted signs but felt that there could be a better placement and height for the free-standing pylon sign, in view of the upcoming project to realign the streets in the vicinity.

MOTION: By Commissioner Wiecha, seconded by Commissioner Mathewson, to approve the resolution recommending approval of a Conditional Use Permit to allow two additional building-mounted signs to be placed at 700 Island Parkway, with the attached conditions. The free-standing pylon sign is continued for redesign to reconsider overall sign height and location to take into consideration staff's concerns outlined in the staff report, as well as other projects which will modify the street system in the area.

Ayes: Wiecha, Mathewson, Gibson, Feierbach, Petersen, Parsons

Noes: None

Absent: Torre

Motion passed 6/0/1

Chair Parsons announced that the item may be appealed to the City Council within ten days.

STUDY SESSION:

A. Amending Hillside Development Standards

AP Ouse presented the staff report, noting that the Commission's discussion will be summarized and a work plan presented to the City Council for review.

Commissioners raised questions and commented as follows:

Commissioner Feierbach:

Felt the need for a map showing the configuration of the merged lots.

Questioned if all contiguous lots had been merged in the HRO-2. CDD Ewing replied that most but not all had been merged; there was at least one misnotification and there may be a few others. Responding to her questions about zoning of the merged lots, CDD Ewing stated that there are no zone changes on the map.

She thinks the Commission should look at the size of house allowed on the merged lots, and at a stricter slope density for HRO

Asked if Waterdog Lake is part of the HRO-3. AP Ouse determined that it is agriculturally zoned and is not within the planning boundaries of the Western Hills. Responding to Commissioner Fierbach's suggestion that it be rezoned to be a part of the HRO-3 zone, Chair Parsons recommended that she meet with staff to discuss the pros and cons of changing the zoning, and then come back to the Commission to decide whether it should be agendized for a zoning change.

Would like to know how many large lots there are with one small house that could be subdivided. CDD Ewing responded that this would take a lot of staff time, and reminded her that in the HRO-1 zone the minimum lot size is 10 acres.

Suggested that houses larger than 4,500 square feet should be allowed on large lots without having to go through the variance procedure. CDD Ewing noted that it will be part of the discussion regarding slope density; that it's a question of how big a house you want to allow on various size properties based on slope. He added that if that is what the Commission wants, they will need to make a strong argument to the Council in favor of larger houses on large lots.

Chair Parsons:

Discussed the possibility of looking at this question City-wide, not just for San Juan Canyon. Suggested that maybe the two tasks can be split out and the need to find a way to move along the pieces so that it can be implemented sooner – needs to be on a tighter schedule. He feels that a task force would only again delay the process and that there is a pipeline to get the public involved in discussions regarding revising slope densities.

Commissioner Wiecha:

Asked how the development of a more unified hillside development ordinance would fit into this picture. CDD Ewing responded, that is a bigger project than what is being discussed and hoped that within a year staff can look at developing a unified hillside site plan review process. He's hearing that the Commission prefers a more incremental approach at this point in order to get smaller results sooner. The other method would be to step back and try to design an approach that takes into account grading, floor area, processing, thresholds for review, what can be done administratively and what can be done at the public hearing level. This would take more time.

Agrees that there would not be much potential benefit from a workshop but does want to provide for public comment and review. CDD Ewing stated that in order to save the Commissioners' time, staff will discuss the possibility of conducting some workshops during the first two steps where they can talk about options before coming back to the Commission.

Asked if there is any environmental review requirement and where it falls into the tasks. AP Ouse replied that review would be required by CEQA. She assumed that during Task II, amendment preparation, once the scope of work and other issues have been identified, it could be reviewed as a project under CEQA and that it could possibly extend to Task V. It would go through the same public hearing process as every other CEQA project. CDD Ewing added that when zoning rules are adopted that increase the standards--reduce development intensity--the CEQA clearance process is pretty straightforward; i.e., you can adopt it as categorically exempt. Since we are doing zoning amendments, it would be pretty simple to make it a part of Step II with a conclusion reached by the approving body in Steps V and VI.

Regarding Task II, looking at allowing transfers outside of the adjacent neighborhood or street, C Wiecha asked if the most preferable locations can be identified within the San Juan Plan, the idea being to cluster lots that are least likely to be developed. Suggested some kind of process where an area is mapped from a particular perspective (i.e., habitat or slope density) in order to identify parcels where we would want transfers originating. CDD Ewing responded that these things are possible, although he's not sure that they have adequate data on sensitive habitats. He reminded the Commission that the lot retirement program is the reverse effect – it's allowing someone to develop their lot when they are willing to go out and find someone else's property to do it. The energy starts from a lot that someone wants to put a house on. The question then becomes, where do we want to encourage them to go shopping. He feels this issue should be addressed in the future, after slope density is resolved.

Commissioner Petersen:

Complimented staff on the excellent discussion documents.

Commissioner Gibson:

Concerned about timing and feels that the urgency is with the San Juan Canyon. Suggested that perhaps homeowner's associations and their e-mail could be utilized for neighborhood outreach.

Commissioner Mathewson:

Concurred with Commissioner Gibson but that if we are to bifurcate the process we should include the Western Hills area in the first go-round. He also felt that that slope formula needs to be tightened up. Suggested contacting Woodside, Portola Valley or Los Altos Hills. He wants to bring the public into the process but felt that putting together a full task force would delay the process inordinately. Willing to put off City-wide discussion until later in the process. Like the use of Homeowner's Associations and suggested utilizing one of the City Manager's quarterly luncheon updates.

In summary, CDD Ewing stated that what he heard was that of the three amendments identified on the first page of the staff report as I, II and III, the first one may be rendered largely moot by the recent lot mergers, and that staff should check to see through mapping how many lots might actually be eligible for lot line adjustment in the HRO zone. The second one is of interest and deals directly with the San Juan Hills Plan. And the most interest is expressed in bullet point under III, at the top of page 2, to evaluate the existing slope density figures and address possible revisions and amendments. It was agreed by consensus that this is where the Commission wants staff to spend most of its time.

NEW BUSINESS: None

REPORTS, STUDIES, UPDATES, AND COMMENTS

CDD Ewing apprised the Commission of an e-mail process currently in use by the City Council regarding questions they may have regarding agenda packets. At Chair Parsons's suggestion, he will e-mail the Commission the details and, if the Commission is interested, attempt to implement a similar process in January.

Chair Parsons called staff's attention to a protected tree on the lot on Ralston Avenue where the fire station was torn down. He noted that during the demolition project it was called to the contractor's attention that the tree had fencing and other debris leaning against it, and that the tree is now dead. CDD Ewing agreed to look at the contract to see if the contractor is liable for any compensation for the tree and added that protecting the tree was clearly a condition of approval.

CDD Ewing reported that he has asked the Park Department to put together a report on tree in-lieu fees, which should be available for the next meeting.

C Mathewson asked for a progress report on street trees and landscaping at the gateway area in front of Village Center and Blockbuster. CDD Ewing stated that the contract was let to Peter Calendar to prepare and was approved at the last City Council Meeting.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting adjourned at 8:02 p.m. to a regular meeting on Tuesday, January 15, 2002 at 7:00 p.m. at Twin Pines Senior and Community Center.

Craig A. Ewing, AICP

Planning Commission Secretary

Audiotapes of Planning Commission Meetings are available for review

in the Community Development Department.

Please call (650) 595-7416 to schedule an appointment